

## The Harris Survey

# Viet Policy Supported, But With Misgivings

By Louis Harris

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On the surface, at least, President Johnson has strong support for the course he has charted in the war in Viet-Nam.

Almost half of all Americans (and more than 60 per cent of those who have formed an opinion) are prepared to back additional U.S. troop commitments to repel any Viet Cong offensive in the next few months. Nearly 60 per cent of the public approve of retaliatory bombings of North Viet-Nam. And support for Mr. Johnson's general handling of the war in Viet-Nam has risen to 65 per cent now, compared with 57 per cent in April and only 41 per cent in January.

The key to these American

attitudes lies in the overwhelming conviction of the American people that the Communists will take over all of Southeast Asia if the United States fails to stand fast in South Viet-Nam. Sixteen of every 20 Americans believe that, and only one out of 20 is convinced it would not happen.

The objective that most people support in South Viet-Nam is to hold the line in order to force the Communists into negotiations. Thus, a majority now believes that Mr. Johnson should get what he says he needs in terms of bombings and American troops in order to put the Nation into

See HARRIS, A6, Col. 1

a position of negotiating from strength. (See Table I.)

But this endorsement of the tactics and aims of the U.S. Government is only half the story of American public opinion and the war in Viet-Nam. Simmering below the surface are misgivings and confusion about the implications of American policy.

The American people are sharply divided, for example, over the President's proposal for a long-term billion dollar aid program to the countries of Southeast Asia. By a slim 7-to-6 margin, more people are for it than against it.

And they are not firmly convinced that the United States can reach its ultimate goal in Viet-Nam. Only 41 per cent are convinced that the defense of South Viet-Nam can be built up sufficiently to negotiate from strength. A third of the public thinks this cannot be done while a quarter of the people aren't sure what might happen.

Widespread unease also exists over the fact that the United States is demanding that Communists stay out of our hemisphere while we are heavily engaged on the borders of Red China. By another 7-to-6 margin, people reject the idea that Red China has as much right to nonencroachment as we have claimed in such places as the Dominican Republic.

Another area of public doubt is over the possibility that the United States might get involved in a land war on the continent of Asia that it might not be able to win. Only by a very close 9-to-8 margin, with a third of the Nation unsure, do people

think such a bogging down of U.S. forces is unlikely. (See Table II.)

These findings indicate that the American people have once again united behind the President in his efforts to shore up the defense of South Viet-Nam and are willing to endure what is needed to do that in the short run. But it is the potential costs and risks over the long run that split the public.

In short, President Johnson is not in trouble now with the American people over Viet-Nam, although he could be in deep trouble in a matter of months if the United States proves unable to resist Viet Cong thrusts or to bring about an honorable negotiated peace.

Q. "How would you rate the job President Johnson has been doing in handling the war in Viet-Nam — excellent, pretty good, only fair, or poor?"

Excellent .....	18%
Pretty good .....	44%
Only fair .....	25%
Poor .....	8%
Not sure .....	5%

Q. "(As you know) President Johnson has ordered continued bombings of North Viet-Nam in retaliation for Communist raids in South Viet-Nam. Do you favor the continued bombings in North Viet-Nam or are you opposed to them?"

Favor .....	59%
Oppose .....	18%
Not sure .....	23%

Q. "This summer, during the rainy season in Viet-Nam, the Communists have said they will mount a land offensive to drive the Americans out of South Viet-Nam. Do you favor the

U.S. sending in more troops to defend South Viet-Nam this summer, or do you think we should just keep the men we have there, or do you feel we should take out most of the troops we have there?

	Send more %	Keep troops there %	Make out %	Not sure %
Nationwide	47	19	11	23
GOP	48	20	9	23
Demo-				
crats	47	19	11	23
Independ-				
ents	48	20	13	19
GOP for				
LBJ	46	25	6	23
East	43	26	12	19
Midwest	45	20	9	26
South	49	12	7	32
West	54	15	15	16
Cities	48	21	11	20
Suburbs	51	20	12	17
Towns	45	22	10	23
Rural	43	15	9	33
Nationwide				
("Not				
sure"				
out)	61	25	14	

Q. "Do you think in the next few months we will be able to build up the defenses of South Viet-Nam to make it possible for some kind of peace to be negotiated there or do you think it isn't likely that can be done?"

	Total %	With "not public sure" %	out %
Can build up defenses	41	55	
Can't be done	33	45	
Not sure	26		

Q. "All in all, what do you think we should do about Viet-Nam now? We can follow one of three courses: Carry the

## I. PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR LBJ POLICIES IN VIET-NAM

	Favor %	Oppose %	Not Sure %
Belief Southeast Asia will go Communist if we don't stand firm in Viet-Nam	79	5	16
Proposal for unconditional negotiations	73	9	18
Over-all approval of LBJ handling of Viet-Nam	62	33	5
Send more U.S. troops to resist Viet Cong during monsoon season	47	30	23
Retaliatory bombings of North Viet-Nam	59	18	23

## PUBLIC DOUBT ABOUT VIET-NAM POLICIES

	Agree %	Disagree %	Not Sure %
Johnson billion-dollar aid program	42	35	23
Belief defense of S. Viet-Nam can be built up to negotiate from strength	41	33	26
If U.S. says Reds ought to get out of places near our borders, China has right to demand U.S. get out of Viet-Nam	35	41	24
U.S. might get involved in a land war in Asia that it might not win	32	35	33

ground war into North Viet-Nam, at the risk of bringing Red China into the fighting; negotiate a settlement with the Communists; or continue to try to hold the line there to prevent the Communists from taking over South Viet-Nam. Which do you favor?"

	Hold line %	Nego- tiate %	Carry war North %	Not sure %
Nationwide				
By Region	36	24	20	20
East	35	26	19	20
Midwest	41	25	16	18
South	38	18	21	23
West	36	27	20	17

Q. "President Johnson has called for unconditional negoti-

ations in Viet-Nam. This means the U.S. would sit down right now with the Communists to try to work out a peace in South Viet-Nam. But he has also said that we would not agree to a settlement in Viet-Nam unless the Communists end their guerrilla warfare in South Viet-Nam. Do you tend to agree with President Johnson or disagree with his stand in Viet-Nam?"

Agree	73%
Disagree	9%
Not sure	18%

Q. "President Johnson has said that if a negotiated peace could be worked out in South Viet-Nam, the United States would take the lead in setting up a billion-dollar effort to

help build the economies of North Viet-Nam, South Viet-Nam, and all of Southeast Asia. Do you favor or oppose President Johnson's proposal for helping Asia?"

Favor	42%
Oppose	35%
Not sure	23%

Q. "It is argued that the United States is trying to control Southeast Asia mainly with military power, while the people there want mainly to set up their own national governments. Therefore, it is argued, we will get ourselves involved in a big land war in Asia with our own troops that we might never be able to win. Do you agree or disagree with this view?"

Agree	32%
Disagree	35%
Not sure	33%

Q. "It is argued that if we don't stand fast in Viet-Nam, the Communists will move in to take over the rest of Southeast Asia. Do you tend to agree or disagree with this point of view?"

Agree	79%
Disagree	5%
Not sure	16%

Q. "It is said that just as we have a right to insist the Communists get out of Cuba and stay out of other places near our borders, the Red Chinese have a right to demand the U.S. get out of places on border. Do you agree or disagree with this view?"

Agree	35%
Disagree	41%
Not sure	24%